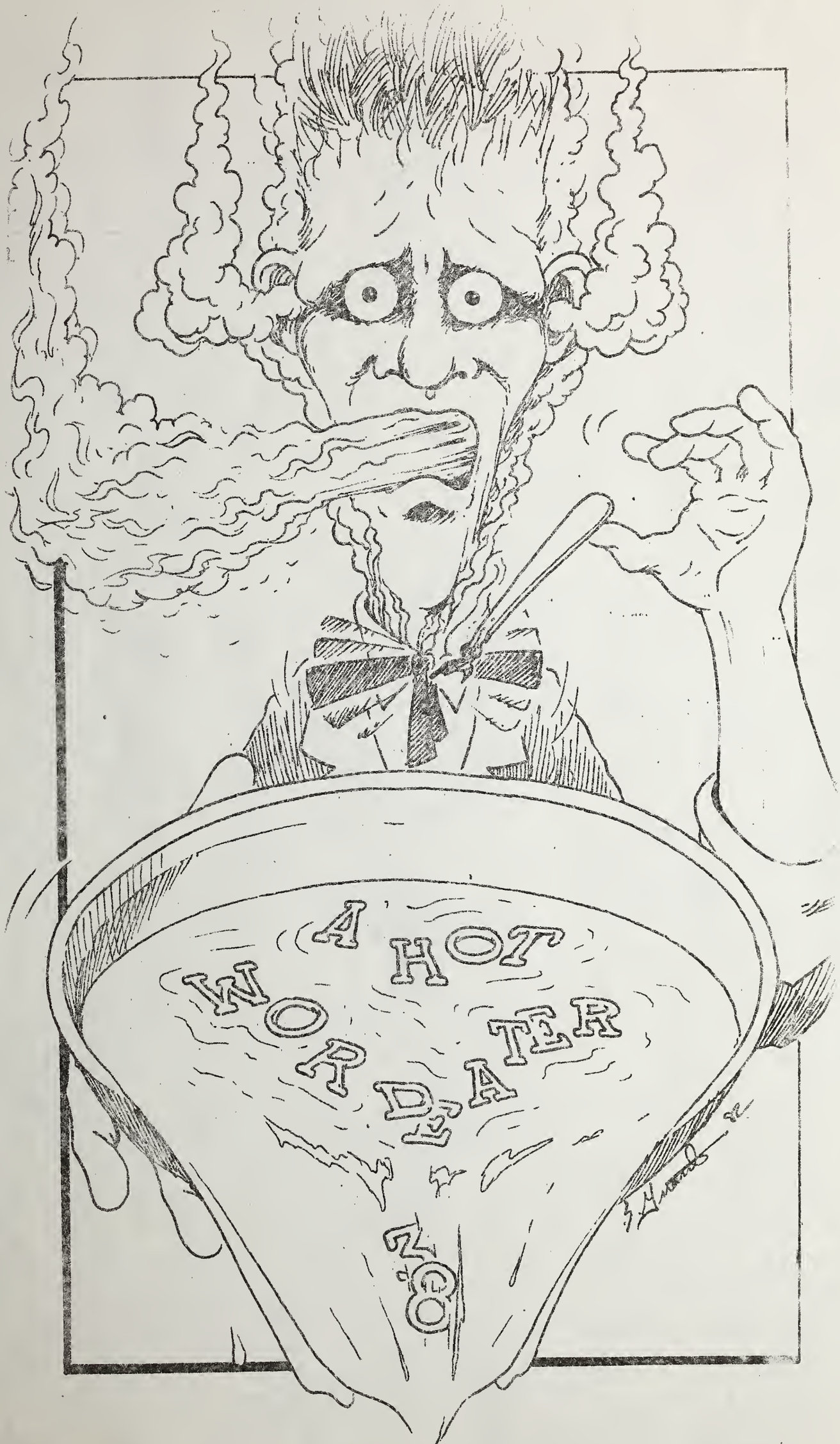

A HOT
WORD
ATER

Vicious Cycle, continued

of empathetic souls?
Walk, walk,
we walk and walk,
cutting our feet on thorns --
but there are roses too,
and we have yet to smell them.

Oh, the folly of yea mortals
Like vast, amorphous amoebas
You creep 'cross your narrow environments
Always rushing to ingest new meanings
With your ravenous pseudopods
Always starving, trying to devour
more particles of life
But I ask you this my confused friends,
Do you know the whys and ways of
what you are?
Have you used your awareness
to poke into your own nucleus?
the core of your Self?
Have you encountered the power and peril
of that which you claim as your own?
Yes, we toss the word "soul" out
across the waters
Like a skipping stone which must sink
But what are we discarding
into the depths?
Diamonds?
Or fool's gold?

****

M. E. Cox

IRIS

It occurred to me the other day
It seems you've got a magic way.
Open those green eyes wide, my child
Show me a rainbow; drive me wild!
Bless thee, O Goddess, for thy kiss
is like fire;
Like ten thousand volts
at the ends of the wire.
Iris, you shook me with all of your might
With the beauty that shines
through my dreams of the night
With the touch that lingers
long after it's gone
And the embrace that warms me
right down to the bone.
There it goes again, oh Lord!
You zapped me with that extension cord.
Top floor, swan-dive, thirty flights high,
Then it's over, just like a sigh.
Tell me the truth,
could it ever be so?
I wish it could,
but I don't think so.
Elated,
Deflated,
Seems,
Like a dream,
Again,
And again.

****

Judy Belfield

I WATCH YOUR BREATHING

I watch your breathing --
chest rising and softly falling
in a gracefully predictable rhythm,
now and then a quivering movement
in the skin.
I can trace the hairs,
one by one among the many
from those that peek
through the vee-neck of your sweater
to those that hide below
lying silkenly in smooth,
curving patterns
where I cannot see, but remember.
I spend this time
thinking these thoughts,
making marvelous pictures of you
in my mind,
not so much in a state of desire,
but in appreciation,
colored with a certain smugness --
I could touch if I wanted,
but I'd rather dream like this
instead.

****

Judy Belfield

SOMETHING PERVERSE

His life didn't mean much to him,
except pain,
so he ended it --
as though it were his,
to do with as he pleased.
Most of us have had moments
when it didn't seem possible
to go on,
yet we did.
There are those of us
who have searched for meaning
in vain;
who have sifted through thoughts
and feelings for purpose,
and finding none,
have suffered our existence
to persevere in anguish,
in private hells,
sometimes so horrible,
words cannot tell of them.
We live on,
and for what?
To see our endurance mocked
by despair?
To see our agonies made so simple
and ended so easily?
His life didn't mean much to him,
and so he ended it.
We heard the news,
and after a too-short moritorium,
progressed with business as usual,
without much more thought to him.
It would seem his life
didn't mean much to us either.

****

To Jo . . . From Dusty, continued

I pray to my God and thank him for you,
who is younger.
I wish that all of us, who are older,
could be blessed to have as a friend you, who are younger.
Our separate lives draw us together, and push us
apart. Our separate lives,have, at times,
Become so welded together that I hear
you call me even when we are not together.
You, who is younger, have taught me,
who is older, much in our short time.
But I, who am older, look to you, who is younger,
and give.
I give the life that I have lived,
and share it with you.
I give the energy that I possess,
and increase your power.
I give the wisdom of my age,
and teach you.
I give the emotions you have yet to feel,
and show you.
I give the thoughts from my mind,
and let you think them.
I give the love I can offer
And you find nourishment in it.
I give all that I am,
and help you search for the all in you.
I give and you take,
and you thank me for the gift.
I, who am older, look to you, who is younger,
and take,
and give.

****

Judy Belfield

AND SO IT CONTINUES

And so it continues --
the unending decay,
the eternal disease,
the infinite annihilation --
eating away at life
like the ocean's
relentless erosion of rocks,
consuming mass,
restructuring it,
making of it, sand crystals,
which wash out to sea
and form beds,
or shorelines,
or maybe castles.
This is the re-creation of things --
the purpose seeming to be
one of perpetual reconstruction,
made possible by a million tiny deaths,
which become more insignificant
with every second that lapses
on the everlasting clock.

And here lies a moment
dead before it was noticed,
wasted before it was recognized --
unused, unseen, uneventful,
it passed into oblivion --
And so it continues.

****

Belfield, Cox, Dickinson and Moore

VICIOUS CYCLE

To create
to live
We create our lives
Push the right buttons
Grind the gears
Smile, act nice --
All for the applause of the
endangered people
who care, or claim to.

Destroy me
but take my all
There's only a little left
nine lives, uh-huh
I've only used two
I see something, up there
beyond what's here
help me find it.

Where do we go?
Where are we headed?
Dare we take the next step
into the Great Unknown?
And who shall we take with us
hand in hand?
Or must we walk the road alone?
Or do we anyway--
Even in the company

(continued)

I Dreamed Of You, continued

I will dream of you tomorrow night, and love you more than ever.
Together forever will we be, I swear.
We will walk, hand in hand through the moonlight.
And the misty mountains will smile upon us.
Destiny will remain intact.
For after the night, when I awake,
Together we will remain.
Else I shall remain, simply cold.
And dream of you for eternity.
So be it.

****

Belfield, Dickinson and Moore

MENTAL MEANDERINGS ON A TUESDAY AFTERNOON

(The blood-red ink of questing minds
Spews forth as rhymeless poetry
It has no purpose by itself
But when it is gazed upon
By souls in tune
It takes on its own
transcendant value)

Their eyes met, olfactory senses raised,
Tactile intentions in their souls
Subjective universes revolving 'round each other
All verbalization secondary to internal communion
They slowly danced to the music inside them
Her yard-long hair sensuously brushed his body
His breathing trembled
Rising and falling
She could feel his heartbeat
    as she pressed her nose to his ear
    and whispered wordless phrases
    kissed his neck softly
    and moaned almost inaudibly
And thus they sought to imbed themselves in the Amber of Eternity
Seeking souls
    Trying to stop in mid-stream
        of Time's onerous flow.

****

Dusty

TO JO . . . FROM DUSTY

I, who am older, look to you, who is younger,
    and take.
I take the life that you have,
    and live it with you.
I take the energy that you possess,
    and increase my power.
I take the wisdom of your youth,
    and learn from it.
I take the emotions that you feel,
    and remember mine of long ago.
I take the thoughts from your mind,
    and think them.
I take the love you can offer
    and I am nourished by it.
I take all that you are,
    and find the all in me.
I take and you give,
    and I thank you for the gift.

(continued)

a Rollex gold watch and his finger minus any sign of marriage.

At the sight of no wedding band, my heart smiled as I thought, "Pat, looks like you threw seven on your first roll of the dice." Then my brain searched frantically to come up with the right words to capture him. At the same time, I was trying to figure out a million questions I had about him. What he did for a living? Where did he live? Who did he live with? His place or mine? My ears felt like smoke was seeping out of them from all the work my brain was doing in record-breaking time. Damn morals and playing demure and modest, I knew what I wanted and I had to have him. It was as simple as that.

After my cigarette was lit, we stared into each others' eyes and I could see he had questions too. Just as I was about to break the silence by thanking him for the light, he spoke. Very softly, almost seductively, he said, "I'm Gerald Collins." At the same time, he was reaching his hand into the inside breast pocket of his jacket. He came out with a big gold-colored badge that looked the size of an armor plate. "I'm with the FBI. Could you come with me. I'd like to talk with you." As I slid off my stool, I replied, "Your place or mine."

****

****

Daniel Preston

I DREAMED OF YOU

I dreamed of you again last night, I held you tightly,
so tightly in my arms. And remembered --
How I loved you then, and ever will,
From afar. So very far.
The distance grows, as does my love. And hate.
So much, how much alike are these.
You said yourself.
Just before you --
Stop it!!

I dreamed of you again last night, for a while you were mine.
How fleeting is the astral world.
How beautiful the night. And beautiful you were.
I whispered that I loved you, and you whispered the same.
A warm breeze blew through the treetops.
And the lover's moon shone brightly.
How many times did you and he walk in the moonlight?
How many times did he say he loved you?
With a plastic smile. And touch you,
And --
The pain!!

I dreamed of you again last night, and perfect was the world.
Things once became repaired. Destiny returned.
My life again perfection. With you.
I wanted only you. The softness of your skin.
The gentle fragrance of your hair.
Your long, soft, warm, crimson hair.
Crimson as my blood on your hands,
And your blood on his.
And my blood on my --
No! Don't!!

I dreamed of you again last night, and innocence returned.
Reality, so jaded, was reborn fresh. My mind was clear.
Clear, and cold as the mountain air.
How tall and uncaring the mountains were.
They've seen it all before. And will again.
Not I. Never again.
Never again to feel the icy dagger that pierced my soul.
My scars are gone.
Not healed, but gone.
Are they indeed?
I think not.

(continued)

Endurance, continued

When the seeds of time have bloomed and died,
And the many become one,
And the earth a spinning pebble
Around a dying sun,

When the mill of change is grinding hard,
And the Milky Way is grist,
When entropy spew chaos
And rules with rusted fist,

When the here and now, and then and there,
And days of men are through,
I'll feel gold lace spun 'round my soul,
And I'll remember you.

****

Dickinson and Moore

THE ENDS AND MEANS OF INNOCENCE?

I

In her hand he stood,
Poised, ready for flight.
Ruffled feathers from my touch,
But stay.
I can bring you up from
the depths
that you persist in
clinging to.
So unruffle your feathers,
and I will calm you.
I will put pennies on your eyes
I'll not tell a soul
Let's keep the monsters at bay
"Welcome to my syndrome."

II

Ladies and gentlemen, my jury
I must certainly confess my need . . .
I swirl on the edge of a whirlpool
I am magnetized by her presence
By all that's holy, I even enjoy being in her company!
But my friends, do not accuse me
Of weakness and frailty in this matter
In my own way I am a paragon of power
Still, I am firmly entrenched and my feelings
Are tender
And must be protected at times.
She is a free spirit
Adrift and bestowing her caring upon the many
Shall I admit the pain and longing
I experience under such conditions?
A need for something I have no right to control?
I must question the ability of my static
and fortified emotions
to deal with such circumstances
And I fear I am empty
Ah, but ignorance of the soul is no excuse
Your judgments are invalid and burdensome
Dragging me down
I need not justify myself before you all
Begone!

"Throw me down a rope!"

****

Patricia McNairy

HIS PLACE OR MINE

I was dining alone that summer afternoon. Sometimes I just have to spend a few hours of the day just collecting my thoughts by eating out or going on a window-shopping spree.

The restaurant hostess said there would be a slight delay before I could be seated. She suggested that I take a seat at the bar and have a drink on the house until my table was ready. She concluded by apologizing for the inconvenience.

As I took a seat at the bar, ordered my drink, and took a cigarette from my purse, a small flame appeared out of nowhere to do the honors. Naturally, I looked for the source from which my lighter came.

Lo and behold, here was a face that should have been on the cover of "Gentlemen's Quarterly." His skin was so smooth it would have put a baby's backside to shame. It was obvious he never had to shave and his coloring was an even paper-sack brown. He had large brown eyes with heavy eyebrows, a small nose, nice full kissable lips, and beautiful sparkling white teeth. His hair was neatly trimmed and of exceptional good grade for a black man.

This man stood about six feet tall and of medium build. I guess he weighed about one-hundred-eighty pounds with what looked like a thirty-inch waist. I could picture him as the "Playgirl" centerfold for any month!

As I looked at the hand that held the cigarette lighter, I noticed he had long fingers with nails that were manicured to perfection. "My goodness," I thought, "what did I do to deserve the presence of this Adonis?"

I am particularly observant of a man's attire, especially if I have some interest in him. In this man, I was interested, willing, waiting, and damn the food! He was dressed sporty so my reasoning said, "At 1:00 p.m. on a Wednesday, he wasn't an executive, so he must be a professional man, doctor or lawyer of some sort." He wore a navy blue double-breasted sport coat with two interlocking G's on the gold buttons, signifying Gucci. He had on a light blue silk shirt, one of those no-collar high-fashion jobs, open at the neck with a single gold chain bearing the sign of Libra, gray gabardine slacks and navy blue Gucci loafers. On his wrist was

(continued)

Judy Belfield

I HAVE LOVED YOU

I have loved you
so fanatically,
with such singleminded concentration,
that my mind seemed to slip
through the silent chambers of my soul,
seeking its way into another realm,
where it might be free from flesh
and the constraints of thought.
I have loved you
so severely
that I thought my skin would split,
my bones shatter,
and I seemed held together
only because there was no breeze
to breathe upon the fragments.
I have held you near
in the dreams of a thousand moments,
pressing my nose softly in your hair,
as my nerves trembled
like the crumblings of light from a falling star
and your voice shivered in my ear
like the asthmatic sigh
until my heartbeat boomed
like clapping thunder
trapped between the buildings in a metropolis.
I have loved you
so painfully,
as though you were the air my lungs needed to survive,
as though you made the blood move in my veins,
and, in your absence,
the blood changed course,
and came rushing to my throat,
as my lungs gasped and choked
and reached for you in desperation,
trying to scratch and claw apart the coffin
in which they'd been interred alive,
and like Madeline Usher,
I grew wildly insane with the effort,
because death would not visit and quiet the agony.
I have loved you
with the fervid asceticism of a saint for her god,
and I carry a stigmata in a secret place
which, still, sometimes
bleeds tears.

****

Maureen Mueller

A LOVE SONNET

The braided fob made from her raven hair,
he wore so grandly, tucked inside his vest;
Her gift of love, that no one else would share,
withstood the fifty winters, love would test.
The golden signet ring upon her hand,
a symbol of his trust, such fervor flamed;
Exemplified the spark, devotion fanned,
The passion burned, the embers still remained.
These simple trinkets bound the two for life,
'midst many tribulations through the years;
But weathering their trials, as man and wife,
they found through love, that even pain endears.
The truest love will always reassure,
Though fate's unkind, the strength can still endure.

****

Mike Stillman

ENDURANCE

When another flood has come and gone
And the glaciers have shot through,
When beast is bone, and bone isrock,
And rock becomes dust too

With decay the only scent still left
And wind the only sound,
And Fort Knox is just a trinket
In the cosmic lost-and-found,

(continued)

Judy Belfield

YESTERDAY WAS TEARS

Yesterday was tears.
They came rolling
from an aching head
which didn't care to control.
I was somewhat mystified,
yet masochistically fascinated
that one tree I'd seen so many autumns before
became too orange-red to bear,
too fireblazingly beautiful to look at --
and so I cried,
confused,
remembering the nagging ache,
which ached more with the remembering,
and tried to think of something
in my forgotten past
which caused this bewilderment.
But just as my face dried,
a child on a tricycle pedalled past,
crunching through fallen leaves,
smiling,
as the sun painted a soft halo about his head,
and he became too innocent to see,
so the tears came again,
blotting him out.
It was just a headache --
just the remains of a vicious headache --
tampering with my temperament,
making things sharper,
honing them into a painful acuity
worse than the headache itself,
yet I pleasured in the pain,
because my eyes saw fiercer colors,
my ears picked up subtle inflections
I might have missed another day,
and I felt more intensely,
as though I absorbed things into myself --
they and I seeming to become
inseparable --
and it was nearly intolerable,
yet I indulged myself willingly.
But that was yesterday.

****

Judy Belfield

LITTLE BY LITTLE

Little by little,
we are pulled from one another
and with every tug,
the muscles stretch and tear
beyond repair
until we begin to forget
what wholeness really meant.
We left our markers along the road,
but like bread crumbs to sparrows,
they were quickly consumed.
One day,
we will sit in sun-forsaken arbors,
isolated not only from each other,
but after all the ties have been
ripped from our souls,
we shall be stripped of our pasts as well,
and we will be so alone --
and so old.

****

Maureen Mueller

MY TALISMAN

My talisman . . .
Bringing good fortune,
Breathing new life,
Illuminating days,
Enhancing nights,
Stirring forgotten emotions,
Fulfilling desires,
Promising eternal love.

Cradled in my heart,
Selfishly hoarding this treasure
Wary of intruders,
Foolishly becoming
possessive --
demanding --

Now love has gone,
The magic is lost --
For he was my charm,
My talisman.

****

Cathie Durkee

PLEASE

Take me from this place
That is hard for me to leave
Wrap me in your caring arms
Hold me tenderly.
For the pain has awakened
Deep inside my breast
The tears of loneliness
I need someone to hold on to
And help me with the rest.

Whatever there was before
Clings to me night and day
All the pain that has gone by
Will destroy me in some way.

There has to be more to life
Than I have thus experienced
I want to love and enjoy
All of life's happiness
To hold and be held,
Laugh, cry and sing
Yes, and to really know
I am all that I am.

****

scared as hell. How about you?"

Medrow nodded and half smiled. The Captain had never called him by his first name before. "Not a very pleasant time to have a battle, is it, sir?"

"How's that?" responded Shaw.

"Just before Christmas, I mean."

"Yeah. Try telling the Krauts that." Both men chuckled wryly.

Shaw held up the demo charge. "This should make a nice Christmas present for Hitler." Medrow nodded and pushed a rocket into the breech of the bazooka.

The rumblings of the German armor drew closer. Corporal Medrow laid the bazooka on the edge of the foxhole. Suddenly, off to the left, came the sharp sound of anti-tank gun firing. Cpt. Shaw tensed. The clanking beyond the edge of the woods became distinct, then stopped. Muffled voices drifted to the men's ears.

"Halftracks!" gasped Shaw, recognizing the sounds. "Get ready!" He knew that the German infantry must already be unloading and advancing into the woods. The supporting American artillery shells began to careen in over to the left.

Suddenly, the whole area erupted into an inferno of noise. The entrenched infantry leveled their weapons. White shapes darted in and out of the trees to the front, and a machine gun stuttered in the white gloom.

The rocket struck the halftrack with a thunderous explosion and a blinding flash of light. Pieces of it came raining down. The remaining Germans disappeared.

Shaw peered into the woods, then surveyed the wrecked halftrack. No survivors. "Fix bayonets!" he shouted. Each man readied his weapon for the next assault. Cpl. Medrow pushed another round into the bazooka.

Suddenly, a volley of shots echoed in the woods. The Germans in the center withdrew, but the waves on either side kept coming. Grenades began to land. The Americans kept firing and firing, but the Germans kept coming and coming.

"Fire at will!" cried Cpt. Shaw, and swung his weapon all around, blazing. Men of both sides fell, but the Americans were outnumbered. A grenade landed in front of the foxhole and detonated. Corporal Medrow cried out and fell, clutching his chest. Shaw stooped to help. He loosened the Corporal's collar and his hand came away with blood.

The shots became sporadic and stopped. The guns still thundered defiantly on the left flank, but the woods had become strangely quiet. Medrow looked up painfully at his commander.

"We gave them a helluva fight, didn't we, Captain?"

"Yes Nick, we did."

"Sir?"

"What is it, son?"

"What's your first name?"

"Michael. My name is Michael."

"Merry Christmas, Mike, sir."

Medrow smiled weakly. Shaw mustered a smile. "Merry Christmas, Nick." Medrow sighed once, and his eyes glazed over. Shaw closed them gently. A shape loomed above the foxhole. He looked up.

A German stood at the lip of the hole with his rifle ready. "You are prisoner," he said in broken English. Shaw raised his hands.

As he climbed from the hole and was led past the carnage and smouldering halftrack, a strange thought entered his head. "Have yourself a merry little Christmas." He trudged through the bloody snow towards prison camp.

****

Maureen Mueller

HURDY-GURDY
(not too wordy)

Love . . .
A hurdy-gurdy
Grinding away
Repetitious rhythms.

The lover . . .
Simian-like,
Grasping and
Pocketing
Each nuance,
As the organ-grinder's shill.

****

Melissa Wessell

TIMOTHY, OCT. 81

in your
looking blue
eyes,
Purity
shines out
full of wonder,
(Babies aren't afraid
to search your eyes
and read your soul.)
and you
read me cleanly.

****

Daniel Preston

MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

The snow whispered gently down through the canopy of pine branches. Silent were the woods, save the soft sighing of the bitter wind. The fallen snow lying on the branches gave the sky an ominous, dark appearance. The softly cold forest floor seemed strangely bright in comparison. A distant rumbling suddenly shook the ground.

"That's it," said Captain Shaw softly. He stepped down from the halftrack's anti-aircraft gun and picked up the receiver on the field radio. They eyes of the infantrymen seated in the vehicle regarded him anxiously.

"Red Dog calling Rocking Chair, come in, Rocking Chair, do you copy? Over." Snowflakes fell gently onto his helmet and melted. Static rasped in his ear, then Rocking Chair answered faintly.

"This is Rocking Chair. Your signal is very weak, Red Dog. Go ahead. Over."

"What is the situation at your location, over."

"I can hear tanks coming up the road around the bend, over."

Captain Shaw frowned. "Hold them as long as you can, Rocking Chair. I am digging in, repeat -- digging in. Over."

"Roger, Red Dog, ov--" The radio fell dead silent in the Captain's ear. He frantically reached for the tuning knobs.

"Dammit," snapped Shaw. No amount of adjustment, however, brought the radio back to life. He gave it a good, sound slap. Nothing.

The nearby artillery units supporting Rocking Chair's forward position suddenly opened up, shaking torrents of snow from the overloaded branches. Captain Shaw disgustedly threw down the handset and jabbed a finger at the pile of picks and shovels lying on the halftracks's floor.

"Get that gear unloaded on the double!" he barked. The soldiers grabbed the tools and filed out the back door. Shaw cast a scalding glance on the useless radio, picked up the last remaining pick and jumped to the ground.

"Dig your foxholes close to the halftrack! Dig 'em deep!" He swung the pick ferociously. Corporal Medrow, who was struggling with a shovel nearby, addressed Cpt. Shaw.

"Pardon me, sir, but what did Rocking Chair have to say?" he inquired.

Without missing a stroke, Shaw replied. "He said, 'There are some Kraut tanks coming'". A volley of artillery fire from the nearby guns drowned out the rest of the sentence, but each man had heard enough. The pace of digging quickened.

A sudden movement to the front caused each man to drop his tool and unsling a weapon. "Halt! Apple!" shouted Cpt. Shaw.

"Pie!" rang a voice from the trees. Shaw relaxed. A group of infantry, led by Lt. Greenwood, emerged from the pines. Lt. Greenwood snapped off a quick salute.

"We're the last ones, Captain, sir," he reported. "The next thing that comes through those trees is gonna be wearin an Iron Cross."

Shaw retrieved his pick. "Break out your shovels!" He shouted at the new group. Several had caught the message and already had. The entrenching continued in earnest.

Sweating despite the cold, several minutes later, Captain Shaw looked up from his work. He frowned uneasily. Something was wrong. Then, it struck him. The guns had stopped firing.

"The guns!" he exclaimed, slapping his helmet, "the forward radio position must've been overrun!" He looked into the trees, as if by some power he could see what was going on. The snow had stopped falling, and the wind had picked up. Each man listened closely straining to hear some sound above the wind. Several years later, it seemed, a distant growling of engines and clanking of treads could be discerned.

"Take your positions!" ordered Shaw. The men scrambled to their foxholes. Cpt. Shaw hurried over to the halftrack.

"Medrow! Give me some help here!" The two men retrieved a demolition charge and a bazooka from the front seat of the vehicle, then Shaw gestured at Lt. Greenwood.

"Greenwood, you and your men man the halftrack," he ordered. Lt. Greenwood leapt up into the vehicle and pulled back the bolt on the machine gun, levelling it at the woods in front of the position.

"Ready here, sir," he reported. The rest of his squad busied themselves preparing ammunition.

The Captain looked over the position once more, then gestured Medrow into a foxhole. He followed.

"Fire on my order!" he commanded. Corporal Medrow looked at Shaw strangely. A distinct tone of fear had crept into the Captain's voice. Medrow cleared his throat.

"Are you scared, sir?" he inquired.

Shaw sighed slowly, the little cloud of frosty breath floating away in the merciless cold. "Yeah, Nick, I'm

(continued)

Songs of the Seeking Souls, continued

May all your fondest dreams come true, in the best ways possible,
I care.
When you see the new buds of spring promising new life, new hope,
Think of me.
When you see the amber sunset among purple clouds,
Think of me.
Think of me and you will always know
that someone cares.

With all my breath
and to each heartbeat sounding
I sigh for spring,
I long for stars.
To you all I give hope for peace,
Yet to myself,
Only sorrow do I embrace.

And thus the curtain is drawn.

****

Judy Belfield

NIGHTS ARE LONG AND LONELY

Nights are long and lonely
confusing me in their blackness
as I reach for the hand
that will Touch me.
Why do I search
in the tangled, light-forsaken forest,
stumbling over rocks,
bruising my arms and legs,
and cutting my skin on sharp sticks?
Is there no end, no end, no end
to the darkness,
to the emptiness,
to the agony,
or is there hope at the next step,
where an arm waits to hold me,
where an ear waits to hear?
I have much to give --
I am pregnant with gifts,
with love stillborn so many times before,
yet I have life to share,
and it breeds like rabbits,
and it bleeds like a mortal wound,
and I am afraid to die.

****

Judy Belfield

SOME MEN

Some men are like chewing gum --
The flavor's gone after the first
five minutes.

****

Maureen Mueller

SUBTLETIES

Silent words
Spoken by longing eyes . . .
Only I can hear.

Awakened dreams
Relived in his mind . . .
Told with a touch.

Emotional gestures
Given to reserve . . .
Accepted with love.

****

Melissa Wessell

ANYONE WHO CAN DRIVE AWAY THAT CLEAN

Anyone who can drive away that clean:

He says you're not considerate,
I say I'm just a fool
for hearing cons and believing lies

Your face changes
each blink frame different
I saw a lot
but didn't see
fool's eyes sucked a con

People try to tell you
but you hope that they're all wrong
Sweet/mean/attractive/ugly You did
see it louder than
this couldn't be, Pollyanna,
ha!
Oh, shit.

****

I invite all of you to walk bravely
Into my mind and soul.
I know that I am odd for the rays of
sunshine and the rainbows I carry
Around with me, but to fulfill my destiny
I must close my eyes and smile,
Forgetting the number of times that I have
been "fucked over," and try to make
those around me smile occasionally.
Perhaps if I make them smile
I will, in turn, get the affection I
so long for.
Now that you have seen a small part
Of my soul, are you brave enough to go on?

Oh, and try as we may,
We can venture only so far
Into each others' deserts
Before our eyes dry out
Our souls go to dust
Yet we are all so lonely
Our lives are just a farce.
If we could but touch each other . . .
But we are all just so lonely.

Yes,
I am floating in my own sorrows
Seeking to grab a hold of salvation
Which might just be another bit of wreckage
Drifting in my ocean
Lacking any solid foundation.
Perhaps I desire to reach the far shore
Of other selves,
But in the end I fear I must swim,
Swim in the depths of my own being
Anxiously holding my breath
Deceiving my selective aloneness with the trivial.

I walk alone,
Reaching out to non-existent entities
pleading for empathy
which does not show itself hollow
under the cover of words.
There must be a mind attuned
somewhere
which feels in its essence
the need for a real reality
and not just the shams.
There must be
a ripped-apart soul
whose edges match my own,
but I have yet to find it.
Perhaps it exists nowhere
and I am doomed to search relentlessly, fruitlessly
for someone
on whom to pour my wretched anguish
and my expansive joys.
Perhaps there is no one
and I shall die
of this great emptiness,
screaming to the skies
to the stars,
to the cosmos
and beyond --
for naught.

(continued)

taken the children to Yosemite to camp instead.

The hurts from their disagreements and his transgressions had piled up over the years. But if anything happened to him, she knew she would miss him very much.

Again the doorbell jostled her back to the present. This time she walked slowly to the front door, without checking her appearance in the hallway mirror. Opening the door she again faced Officer Sexton and another older officer. Both of their faces were somber. Their faces said it all. Lillian wept.

****

Belfield, Dickingon, Frink, and Moore

SONGS OF THE SEEKING SOULS

Four island realities
Revolving around a cosmic axis
Creative forces in a sort of harmony
Only thus can individuals be united
And thus the curtain rises on linguistic fusion.

We gather in our individual ego-shrouds
cloaked in self,
soaked in self --
and attempt to assimilate ourselves
one into the other.

As we reach deep into our souls
We must first come to terms with our mirrored images
Before we can truly delve into each others' psyches
And find the authentic selves inside
And there "NAKED" of our false exteriors
We can finally commune and communicate.

And with this union of our eternal souls
We soar
Seeking our release
From these ego-chains
We fly into the darkest eve
Crying over mortal pain
Into the night.

But how can these internal fibres of existence
Be unearthed, dug up from the primal depths
Where they have been buried by years of pain
That have become petrified into solid walls
Complex and devious defense-mechanisms
That form the labyrinth palace-prison?

Isolets, we,
cut off viciously from one and the other
by accidents we did not
foresee,
or agree to,
yet we endeavor now to bridge the gaps
between us
by sorting out each others' tangled agonies
and ecstasies
hoping to homogenize our singular experiences
while retaining our singularity.

(continued)

on Jack. Jack had been missing from the boat for two days and nights and no one knew his whereabouts. The Seattle Police had suggested that she fly there as soon as possible to file the official missing person report as his next of kin.

She had called her mother-in-law to come over and care for the household and had taken a taxi all the way to San Francisco International Airport, arriving there before dawn. She had managed to get a seat on TWA's next flight to Seattle. Immediately upon disembarking at Seattle, she was paged to the airport's courtesy phone. The Seattle policeman apologized profusely. The whole report had been in error. Jack had returned to the boat angry that the police had been searching for him and stated that he had just been away for a little while for "personal reasons." Lillian thought she knew who his "personal reason" was. She had been so angry that she just stayed right at the Seattle airport until she could get a flight back to San Francisco. Jack, after returning home from that expedition, had never given her much of an explanation for his temporary disappearance. He had only fired the man who had reported him missing. Now he always worked alone; she guessed that it gave him a lot more freedom.

Jack had always been independent and self-sufficient, she thought. She recalled the time while away at sea he had almost completely severed his finger. Since there was no medical help available, he had carefully taped the finger back in place. Over the years, it had healed so well that it would be difficult to tell that anything had ever happened to the finger.

How different she and Jack were, Lillian thought. They truly lived in two different worlds. He loved the water; she hated the water so much that it was a dreaded chore to take a bath. She loved giving dinner parties in their home, he despised having to get "dressed up." He was, however, becoming increasingly concerned over his appearance. Lately, he wore his hat as much as he possibly could to cover his balding head. He kept himself lean and hated fatness in anyone. He was not a bad looking man, in a rugged sort of way, despite the fact that he had one glass eye; a glass eye that didn't move with the other one because it had been damaged too deeply for a moving artificial eye. His mother had never forgiven him for playing with that gunpowder while she was at work supporting the family. Of course, it was difficult for a boy of nine to know what to do with himself with no one to supervise him during the day.

Lillian's thoughts drifted back to the present situation. Why would another boat shoot at him? Well, she thought, there could be plenty of reasons. She should have been forewarned when he went to the police two months ago and applied for a permit to carry a gun. Ughh! That gun! How she hated him bringing it into the house.

Before leaving home this time he had taken her for lunch to that rustic restaurant in Bodega Bay. It had been so pleasant overlooking the ocean and the food had been so delicious. She had been content to have that time with him, but he had been preoccupied the entire time. She should have known something was seriously wrong. Since being elected president of the Commercial Fisherman's Association, he had been outspoken, presumably on behalf of his association, on many political matters. He had been having serious disagreements with Harry Bridges, the union leader. She didn't even know what those were about. He also had been working to keep the Japanese tuna fishermen out of American waters and to get a boycott of Japanese canned tuna in America. Could he have treaded on anyone's toes so badly that they wanted to shoot him? Could a husband or boyfriend of one of his "ladies" have wanted him out of the picture?

Not to worry, Lillian told herself. He would be all right. He was very competent at taking care of himself. He had taken good care of her too, in his own way, she also told herself. How many of her friends lived in a five-bedroom, three-bathroom home with a den and library, and also a rumpus room on the lower level. How many other people purchased their houses with cash. Jack didn't like loving anybody anything. Maybe Jack didn't spend any time around the house or make any improvements, but there was always sufficient money available for her to hire Mr. Preston, their handyman of many years.

All their years together flashed through her mind. Their first few years had been good. He had supplied the money to buy him his first boat. They had had few disagreements. But then came the children she had longed for, and the subsequent arguments.

She had raised the children herself with Jack being away fishing from early spring to late autumn, and repairing his boat in the winter. He would show up a little here and there and find fault with the way she handled and disciplined them. He wanted his sons to be more like him. He constantly accused her of coddling the boys while she was just being a good mother. When the boys were young, he had wanted to take them on some of his summer fishing trips. She felt that was just too risky and had packed up and

(continued)

Mary Davisson

THE FISHERMAN'S WIFE

The brown kitchen radio resting on the sprawling white countertop hummed softly as Lillian stood alongside of it, slicing celery. The music stopped and the announcer stated that at the sound of the tone the time would be two o'clock and time for the hourly news. Lillian listened without too much interest as the newscaster indicated that the latest Gallup Poll showed Richard Nixon had a slight lead over John Kennedy in the upcoming presidential election.

Lillian was more concerned with preparing the dinner for her family and the two couples she had invited for the evening. She wanted everything to go well. She quickly glanced into the dining room at the table which she had carefully set the day before. Her wedding china and silverware were all shiny and perfectly positioned; the daisy centerpiece was still fresh looking, but the room still looked gloomy. There never was much sunshine in this part of San Francisco, which was so close to the ocean. The murky fog even managed to give the polished mahogany china cabinet and the multicolored oriental carpet a lackluster appearance.

As Lillian started to slice the sourdough for the garlic bread, she began to worry about whether Jack would be home in time for dinner. His boat was scheduled to dock early this afternoon, but after being aboard for three weeks, Jack could very easily be lured to the Sea Witch Tavern by the other commercial fishermen he knew. The several rounds of drinks and long exchange of stories could have him arriving for dinner much later than the guests. Also, Jack could be very laconic when he was in the company of people who showed little interest in fishing. She certainly hoped he would be politely sociable with her two girlfriends and their husbands.

As Lillian bustled around the yellow walled kitchen she wondered if their eldest son, John, would show up for dinner at all. She hoped he didn't have another date with Susan. She just didn't like that girl, but now that John was twenty-four and had completed his stint in the Army, what she liked or didn't like was of little concern to him.

Marie, nineteen, would undoubtedly arrive while the dinner was in progress and go sullenly to her room without so much as saying "hello" to anyone. Lillian just didn't know how to handle her. Since that last argument they had a week ago, there had been little communication between the two of them.

Eric, sixteen, her pride and joy, would be at dinner for sure. She could count on him. Although very quiet, he was always polite and dependable. She was glad that she had been able to keep him from dating so far. That prevented many problems.

Suddenly, the chiming of the doorbell interrupted Lillian's thoughts. Wiping her hands on her terrycloth apron before removing it, Lillian rushed through the hallway. A quick glance in the hallway mirror assured Lillian that her recently tinted chestnut hair was in place. How Jack had hated her previously graying hair. She also noted with satisfaction that after three weeks of dieting her figure wasn't too bad for a woman of fifty-three.

Opening the front door, Lillian was startled to find herself face to face with a tall, young, dark-haired, uniformed Coast Guard Officer.

"Mrs. Johnson? I'm Officer Sexton of the Coast Guard. May I come in?"

As Lillian showed him into the living room, she noticed the graveness of his face and knew something was wrong.

"Would you care for a cup of coffee, Officer?" Lillian felt it necessary to offer him the same hospitality that she would any other guest.

"No thank you, Mrs. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson, your husband radioed a 'May Day' into the Coast Guard at approximately twelve-hundred hours today. He indicated that another boat was firing shots at his boat. Since that time, we have been searching the waters near his stated position, but haven't been able to locate any trace of his boat or the boat that was allegedly firing on him. We are continuing and expanding the search, but felt that you should be informed of the situation. We will keep you posted on our progress."

Trembling, Lillian thanked the officer and showed him back through the hallway. Slowly she shut the front door and returned to the kitchen. She pulled a gray chair away from the chrome table and for the first time that day, she sat down. Many thoughts were swimming through her head. She told herself that this must just be another stunt of his. Another stunt like that Seattle fiasco. How angry she had been that time! That was two years ago, now. Jack had been on a fishing trip to Seattle. She remembered that night when she had been awakened from a sound sleep by the reverberations of the telephone. The Seattle Police Department was calling to inform her that Jack's hired hand on the boat had filed a missing person report

(Continued)

A moment of silence followed.
"I believe we've reached an agreement, Gentlemen," stated the Psychocorrelator. "Throw the switch."

****

Judy Belfield

EVERY MORNING THEY COME TO THE RESTAURANT

Every morning they come to the restaurant,
sit in the same seats,
and order the same thing --
he with a magnificent face,
so like Norman Rockwell's,
aged, lined, facile,
topped with wavy, white, white hair,
she, slightly stooped,
with a walk not so tired as his.
They dress to the teeth,
these two,
she in silky print dresses
belted at the waist,
sensible shoes that match,
and a hairnet studded with multicolored rhinestones
that sparkle in the sunlight.
He wears a dark blue suit,
neatly pressed,
that looks only slightly large.
His prominently creased trousers
are only slightly too short,
and his two-toned blue shoes
are off only a shade or two.
She leads the way,
he follows,
they sit,
he speaks
in a voice only slightly too loud,
that sounds like Jimmy Stewart's
lowered a notch or two.
"Okay . . . okay,"
I hear him say
slowly, contentedly, repeatedly,
and sometimes,
"Okay, hon,"
and he stirs his coffee with a passion,
attacking the cup with his spoon,
and the clanking sound punctuates the room.
People turn their heads curiously,
the ones who aren't regulars
and don't know he does this every day,
seemingly oblivious to the racket he creates --
but no one really minds.
Later they leave.
She leads the way,
he follows,
both tottering purposefully toward the cash register,
where everyone hears him say,
"Oh, I'm fine . . . just fine,"
slowly, cheerfully,
after he's stopped to say hello
to several people on the way,
and patted a baby's head gently
with his long-fingered, wrinkled hands.
Where do they come from
and where do they go
or do they just dress up like this
for breakfast?

****

He wondered if an Aries woman could understand insanity. Maybe astrology in itself was insane. Maybe not.

"You know, I'm really insane."

"Oh, I know that. Let's get crazy together."

Jees, this is tough. I deserve a medal for this one. "NO, I mean really insane. Nutzoid. Toys in the attic. Coons in the henhouse. Over the edge. Bats in the belfry. Vampires in the ventways."

She smiled demurely. "Just what I've always wanted," she purred.

God, maybe she really is different. Maybe I'm just paranoid. Better pinch myself. Or better yet, pinch her. Stop these thoughts! Halt!! You want to get stabbed?

He got up. "Here. Let me read you this tory that I wrote and you can decide. And this is just white bread. Wait til I bring out the cracked wheat."

"Anything, lover. Let's write our own story."

"Maybe. Here goes."

Reba and Sheba usually watched the synthetarist tune his instrument the old-fashioned way, with a solar oscilloscope.

"It came as a great surprise to be the recipient of such an honor," said Reba, combing his flaming red locks with what looked to be a waffle iron.

"The elders say that the worthy will always rise to the top at Springfest. I am thankful that I became of age last week." Sheba carefully applied cosmascara to her nose-lashes. It was important to be at her very best for the holy ones.

With the grinning percussionizer now ready to play, the two dozen honored ones called the Kree-Vayim, devoted their attention to the talented quintet, who worked their way through rousing versions of "Stand By Me," "Proud Mary," and "Chestnut Fever."

The common folk of Pastramio stood at the base of the great stone tower trying in vain to hear the music that had become almost spiritual in nature. Most accepted their fate with resignation, but some were anxiously gazing into the crimson skies, waiting for the flame-spitting, people-swallowing monsters of legend that always made their appearance on the annual day of judgment. Each year, a lucky handful was chosen to view the pageant from the small plaza at the top of the ancient tower in the center of Pastramio.

One ground-level citizen, a swarthy fellow clad in a new bleegskin tunic, muttered, "Them goddam slime-suckers should stay where they belong." The good citizenry were shocked at this sacrilege, and they began pelting the unfortunate commoner with the small pieces of metal that littered the ground. Such rudeness was the equivalent of inquiring about Christmas Clubs at the blood bank.

The twenty-nine on the cap of the tower were prancing about like puppies, and grinning with the enthusiasm of a child on Christmas eve. They knew that their Santa would come down from the skies soon.

Sheba was the first to spot the wings and flames in the eastern sky. "Ho!" she cried, and fainted into Reba's arms. "Eternal life!" he shouted in a wide-eyed frenzy.

The jealous commoners watched as the beasts came down from the heavens with gaping jaws and stretching talons. They landed on the familiar stone and began to munch on the twenty-nine in an orgiastic frenzy of blood and bone. It was spring, and the Swallowers had returned to Cap-Pastramio.

"Puns are the lowest form of humor known to man," she said coldly. They both got up.

"See? I told you." He beamed maniacally, gleaming, but disappointed.

"If you're going to write at all, why can't you write something nice? I read this poem last week by a lady named Kilmer that was so--"

He interrupted. "Yeah, well, that's the way it goes."

"It's getting late. I'd better leave."

"Okay. Right this way." He knew that he wouldn't call her again. He was glad that she didn't have a chance to draw the blade.

A scholarly group of whitecoats were observing the scene.

"Not quite normal," said the first Psychiatrist.

"Unbalanced," ventured the Psychologist.

"Considerably more bizarre than the garden-variety abnormalities," offered the Psychoanalyst with a raised eyebrow.

"Obviously deviated from the norm, perhaps including a slight schizophreniform disorder,"said the Psychobehavioralist, polishing his glasses on his sleeve.

The Psychorationalist tapped his pipe. "Gentlemen, I believe that we can consider the patient to be seriously neurotic, with elements of Paranoia."

"I would go so far as to suggest Anhedonia, in fact, a clear case of undifferentiated schizophrenia," diagnosed the Psychocryptologist. The others nodded in agreement.

"You're understating the case, Doctor," said the Psychoneurologist emphatically. "There are quite frankly patterns of advanced psychosis. This patient is a textbook example of a dangerously acute reactive schizophrenic."

(continued)

Judy Belfield

TODAY'S SUN IS TRYING SO HARD

Today's sun is trying so hard
to squeeze through the crowds
of thick, gray clouds.
In the east,
I see it buttering up the sky --
but the westerly gloom,
like a giant loom,
weaves itself into an opaque coverlet
that hides the heavens.
And I am chasing stardust --
trailings of light
left over from the night
that lead to glimmering havens
where I might stay
until the shimmer fails.
I think I'll head east --
follow Old Sol
to the morning horizon
where he lolls in his own soup,
unable to wash out
his western oppressor,
and turning my back
to the ashen-faced shadows,
I'll pretend there is only
yellow, yellow, and more yellow,
while shouting songs of hope
and goading the feeble sunrays
to stretch and feel their power
against the pallid foe.
Now, I know
some days the battle is futile,
and I might as well resign myself
to a certain fate,
while I sit and wait
for more brilliant times --
but there will be
no resignation from me
today,
anyway.

****

Mike Stillman

EXTREME WEIRDNESS

Her eyes were tempting. Very tempting, because there was mystery involved. That's what he told himself. He felt the liquor stalking through his bloodstream like a cocky burglar, a cat burglar in black, like the bottle's label, quiet and grinning, saying I'd rather not be nabbed, but who cares, I'll blow their heads off anyway. She gave him another Cheshire look and he poured another round, being careful not to let her see the chip on his glass. As if it mattered at three a.m.

Ninety-nine out of a hundred would go for her now, his mind said. Another part of him said that the entire hundred would. She was certainly attractive. Nice figure, tight in all the right places. She also was obviously attracted to him. Flirting, taking steps beyond flirting, brushing against him. And they got along well. She even liked his bizarre sense of humor, most of it. She seemed infatuated; he could sense her watching him sometimes when she thought he wasn't looking. So why not?

I'll tell you why not, he told himself sharply. There have been a hundred girls before her, all of them liking my looks and jokes at first. But the more they get to know me, the more they dislike me. I'm too bizarre, too weird, for any girl. I've got a kind of insanity just below the skin. I enjoy it. But nobody else ever would. There's no mind bridge between us, and empty sex just doesn't make it.

She was making eyes now, those mystery eyes. He couldn't decide whether the sparkle reminded him of champagne, or of ice. Sometimes they were bubbly and refreshing, other times they were chilling.

With green eyes, you never know, he told himself. Most of the others had blue eyes, but that didn't mean anything. It was like a killer on the highway, changing clothes but not changing faces. Why do they want to kill me? Why does the moon shine? The same hand that holds the knife holds the key, and I never know which they will use until it's almost too late, until my heart is exposed. I can still feel the scars from some of those mad lunges in the darkness. The first one barely missed my heart, and it still feels cold about a quarter-inch away.

"You want to smoke another one of these?" she asked him. She was all curled up in his lap. She. What a dangerous word.

At least I can admit I'm insane. Is it true that if I know that I am, then I'm really not? Is that the catch? Maybe if I weren't so honest with myself . . .

(continued)

Madness Revisited, continued

but she didn't wake up
happy like she'd thought.

Burning bridges, wheels on fire,
isn't there another way?
'cause
my g-dang prescription
is so rough, too
rough for me.

I wanna vaccinate me? -- maybe
just three days . . . three days . . .
and maybe I'll be
numb enough to pick up prescriptions
again.

((can ya walk on ice?
can ya
fill me with ice?))

let's do the kid a favor, shall we?
will god or the neighbors,
or the Great Unknown,
(for I am, too,
a piece
of it all.)
Can we take a little break today?

. . .Gentle Eyes
is laying up
stairs. . .curled up
on his side and with
eyes gently closed;
he said he loved me just the same.
But I don't wanna FEEL
all this suffering;;; hey,
Johnny, can we take a
little break?

((Don't even want
to write
a reflection))

I took my love out --
from confinement,
and laying it
dumbly out before me
with eyes of pain I watched
pierce metal studs searing thoughts
while watching you
cavort and play,
and touching your Dead
Arm, dull and
lifeless, at least for
me, and searing
--turned--
silent tears
screaming chasms.

Later, softly,
looking out.

Early morning watching
squirrel wags tail
like a cat or an antennae
beating furry tom-tom across green
waters,
two hours past the birds' call
crickets still chorus.

People drive by
coffee-cupped sleep-eyed
on their ways to work,
and sitting
looking at the desk.

(Soft light is fading now.)

with the burning-hurting of
too-little-sleep in the
eyes, and those lingering memories,
feelings, and doubts.
Too arrested
to go to sleep, and
too filled-up to do
mundane revolving tasks.
So I sit here alone,
me and my dream machine,
thinking I may never know,
and wondering how to
hide the hurt.

****

Elayne Hill

INSIDE VAN GOGH, RENOIR, RAPHAEL, ETC.

In lets
out lets
subterranean passage
electro-light frequencies
bring irridescent color
to a painter's brush
tiny little textures
make patterns in the paint
they unfold a living breathing
creative work entitled --
Untitled so the viewer
can search for personal
experience he alone has had.
An achievement for the artist.
He's grasped the attention of
the world.

****

Ernest McCabe

YEA, THE WHEELS ARE TURNIN
(BACKWARDS)

The wheels are spinnin upstairs
Smashing green watermelon to
Reddish pulp, smashing the fat
Black seeds of thoughts into
Irretrievable powder, screening them
From the light of a fixated ray
Keeping them free from the net --
Men who silently stalk the silent
Halls of my mind.

The men stop, look up at the
Bony plate overhead. One says,
"That was a good one today, but
It's gone." "Yeah, but have you
ever noticed that it doesn't happen
Until he tries to use this." He
kicked the right prefrontal lobe.
"Hey take it easy," the other said.
"Don't worry. This thing hasn't been
worked anyway."

It's virtually impossible to wear sunglasses
sideways, if you have a prominent nose.

****

Judy Belfield

I HAVE HEARD

I have heard
that the pursuit of knowledge
gives meaning to life --
how noble,
how absurd!
Knowledge is not power,
does not give purpose,
but is an unending source of pain --
ask any guru,
read any philosopher --
the road to Truth
is paved with thorns,
and those foolish enough to take it
soon discover
there is no light at the horizon --
indeed, there is no horizon,
but only an ephemeral goal
that slips further into the distance
the closer we think we get,
until, at last, we conclude
there are no conclusions,
but only bloody feet.

****

Melissa Wessell

MADNESS REVISITED FOR THE FIRST TIME

The snakes grabbed hold of
her and began
to squeeze firmly
around her neck.

She cried out dying animal
wail in the dark held her breath.

Snakes squeezed harder. VISIONS
of death danced 'round
legs and pain stabbed the
belly.

NO. I'm never going
to do that again,
never gonna do that.

Maybe if I can find
my heart, if it still might
be connected to that
pull-string let it snap back again,
can we reel it in and never go back???

Can you
isolate the roots? Can you
trace the gnarling back inside
until you've found the
Golden Bath,
the smile of Sweet Ambrosia???

and let's put the
snakes out. Let's kill them,
once and for good.

She drew a deep breath.

Streets too busy burning incarcerating
inside seared flesh.
And the Dance Card
read something like this: wanna creep
and step around you 'cause you give
me so much pain.
And wanna have the
magic number sitting in my
Brain.
Let's (NO) eat some pills and
accidently (NO) die
'cause
you're lookin' at
love's fool again,
at love's crazy fool.
and isn't it funny,

(continued)

Ernest McCabe

THE MISERIES OF AN AMATEUR WRITER

As too propeer speling I have no clu
No sagee advise too giv too you
Fo mee spellling is a puzzzle of mazzzes
Of Roobicks cubes annd adolesant phrases

Spilling fo meee is an alien places of
Burrned out dimentions aggainstt timmme
Andd space no rytheme no rime no placce.
Butt ef I amm too maakke it sum dayy
Es a ritere of pooem versa or plaay
Ill'l hav too learne to spill sooome dai

****

Maureen Mueller

THEN

When I was young,
Every day brought
Fresh new beginnings,
Challenging my mind,
And every evening ended
With the glow
Of the next day's dawn.

****

Cathie Durkee

GIVING UP

I had to stop forevermore
loving, hoping, nevermore
Can't live on dreams
Or feelings of pain

I had to stop forevermore
caring, wanting, nevermore
It's easier this way
Slipping into a black void

I had to stop forevermore
dreaming, longing, nevermore
Making it all go away
A deathly silence inside

****

Judy Belfield

WHERE AM I GOING?

Where am I going?
I ask myself,
and the words ring shallow,
echoing in the great emptiness,
as I meet my brothers on the path
who nod and smile
as though they know the secret
but cannot tell.
Where am I going?
The question begins innocent,
becomes edgy
and shouts through my nerves,
becomes wildly enraged,
boiling in my veins,
becomes insanely unbridled,
shaking my bones
with violent convulsions,
pleads,
tears searing into my soul,
in desperation,
becomes despondent,
and slips lifelessly, listlessly,
near to despair.
A voice nags somewhere --
it says the road has no end,
but that each step
is an end to be savored.
I hear the words,
but don't believe them.

****

Maureen Mueller

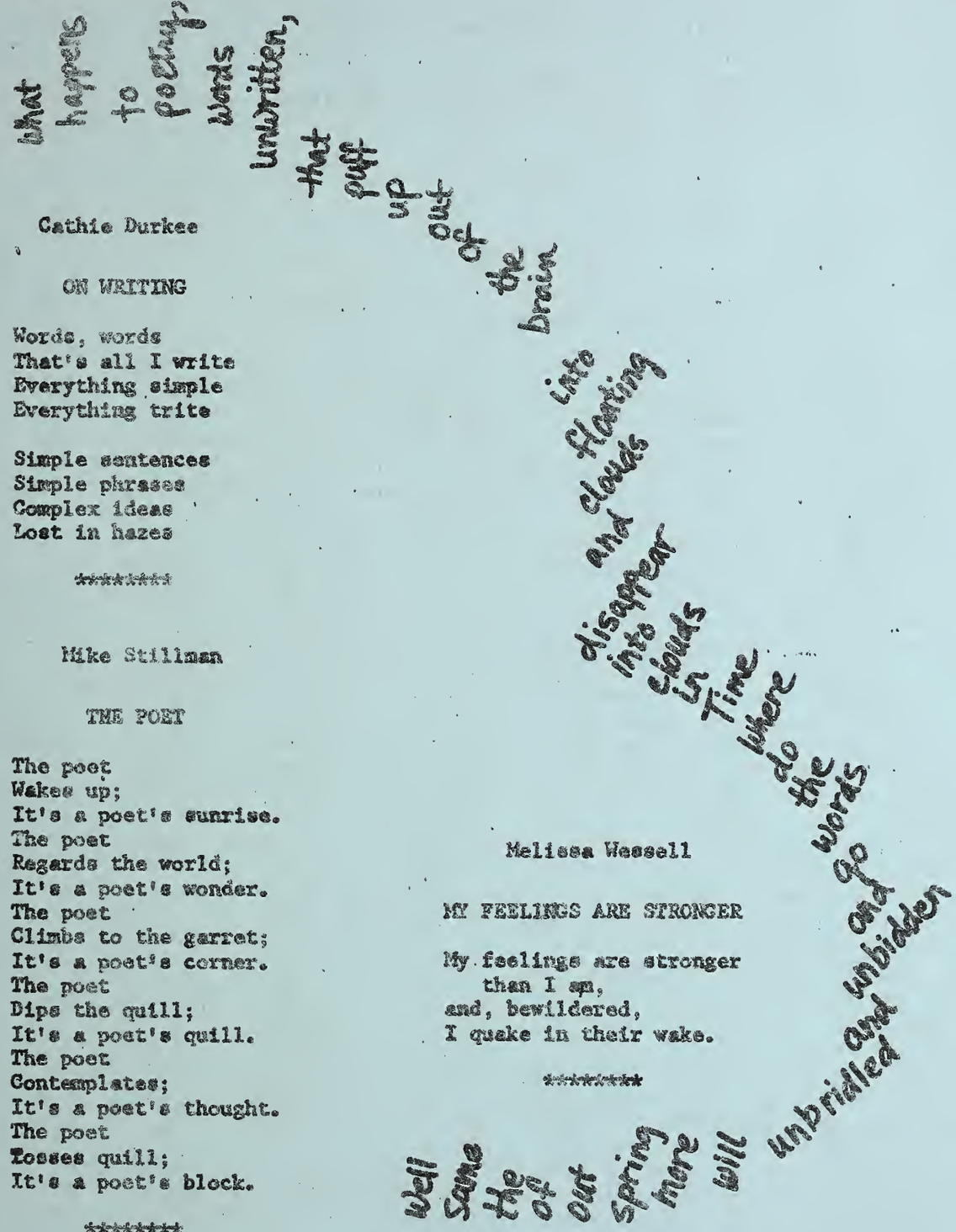
CHAMELEON-LIKE, THEY CHANGE UPON A WHIM

Chameleon-like, they change upon a whim --
Decisions never made, conclusions none,
Procrastinating while their time grows dim --
Life's challenges not met, thus never won.
These apathetic souls ne'er risk nor dare --
No venturesome a task will undertake,
Through life they slide, completely unaware
That precious time is squandered in their wake.
Ambitions are dismissed as asinine --
Aspiring to be aimless is a goal,
What stimulus can shake these stoic minds . . .
With self-respect not taken as the toll.
Oh, sons and daughters grasp that fleeting dream,
And quell the snuffer near the taper's gleam.

****

Melissa Wessell

WHAT HAPPENS TO POETRY



Cathie Durkee

ON WRITING

Words, words
That's all I write
Everything simple
Everything trite

Simple sentences
Simple phrases
Complex ideas
Lost in hazes

****

Mike Stillman

THE POET

The poet
Wakes up;
It's a poet's sunrise.
The poet
Regards the world;
It's a poet's wonder.
The poet
Climbs to the garret;
It's a poet's corner.
The poet
Dips the quill;
It's a poet's quill.
The poet
Contemplates;
It's a poet's thought.
The poet
Tosses quill;
It's a poet's block.

****

Melissa Wessell

MY FEELINGS ARE STRONGER

My feelings are stronger
than I am,
and, bewildered,
I quake in their wake.

****

They Called Me Malevolent, continued

I pitied them
as they tightened their belts
and their eyes became popped-out marbles in ashen sockets --
pitied them too late, however,
for as I was about to lend a hand,
the haze lifted --
dissolved into the air from whence it came,
where it waits for another time to spring --
and I tell them about it,
explaining there are catastrophes yet to come,
but again they settle into their snug, smug, little cocoons
and say I'm fanatic.

****

Mike Stillman

DO TECHNICOLOR MINDS BLEED RAINBOW STIGMATA?

Luke was angry. Things weren't going quite like he had planned, and his rugged features were becoming sterner by the minute. Perhaps he would erupt in a fit of jealousy in time for the next commercial, keeping a nationwide audience away from the kitchen while a silver-tongued huckster sold detergent or designer jeans. Several of these viewers were on a bridge over a river forty-one and a half degrees north of the equator, at a place where the bulkiest and most aggressive males wore purple, and students were sometimes forced to park on the grass.

The new Sony two-piece television displayed an excellent picture for the capacity crowd in the south lounge, except for those students who were too close to the screen, too far to the side, behind someone's head, near the windows, too far back, or those who had left their contact/glasses/binoculars in their homes/cars/lockers/other coats. On their way to class or the cafeteria, a few students enjoyed the sunlight reflecting off the river, but most were captivated with the projections of a small box on a big screen.

Suddenly there appeared an odd shimmering in the space above the projection box, and a murmur of confusion arose from the viewers. Perhaps this contraption still has a few bugs in it, some thought. Then the vague shape materialized into a long-haired bearded man in his thirties, barefoot and wearing ragged clothes. His arms were raised in triumph, and he smiled at the crowd beatifically from his perch on top of the black box. All was silent for one odd moment.

Then the stranger addressed the multitude in a strong but serene voice. "Greetings, brothers. I have returned to lead you on the true path in this hour of darkness. I see by your beautiful faces that there is some confusion as to my identity. You know me by many names. I am the Immortal One. I am Dionysos, Elijah, Buddha, The Avatar, The Father, The Son, The Holy Spirit. I am the Head Apollo, St. Sophia, Yahweh, Siddhartha, the King. I am Shiva, Papa Zen, Vishnu, Dr. Pepper, Zoroaster, Kali, The Great Punta. Some know me as Nirguna, the Big Burrito, Brahma, Monsanto of Turin, Rama, Krishnu, or Jesus. These are but labels. I have returned to show you."

He was interrupted by a riotous outpour of anger from the crowd.

"Get out of the way, Fathead!"

"Some Hairy-Krishna asshole . . ."

"Just what we need, a flower child on acid.."

"Go back to your commune, prick!"

The mob began to throw pens, pencils, and magic markers at the intruder, causing multicolored stigmata to appear on his thin face and arms. He endured the attack with a sad expression on his face.

As the riot reached a crescendo, the students were shocked to see the man and all the projectiles disappear. Except one. A slim silver pen remained lying on the box.

The room was silent as one student walked up to the box and picked up the pen cautiously. He read the word engraved on its clip:

CROSS

****

Ernest McCabe

DOES ACID ROCK

Does acid rock contain hydrochloric or
sulfuric acid?
Is "hard rock" just a chip off the old
block?

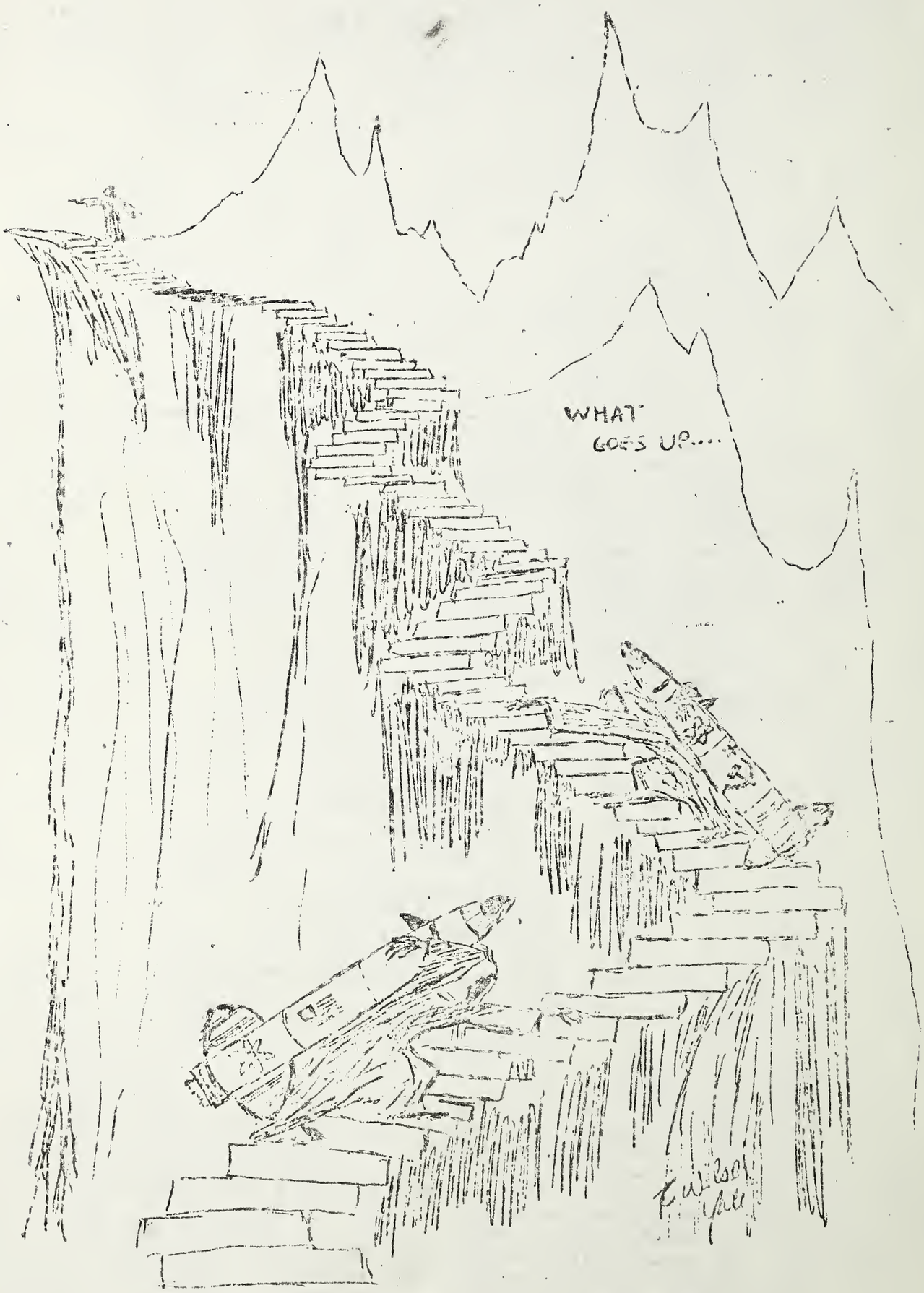
****

Judy Belfield

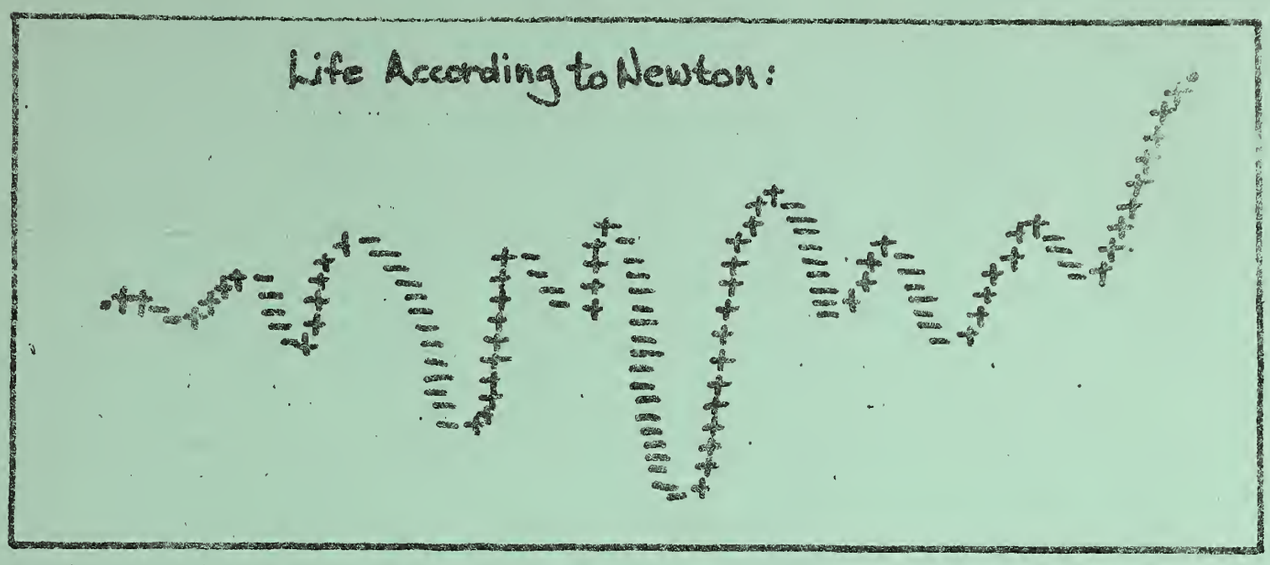
THEY CALLED ME MALEVOLENT

They called me malevolent
as I spat out warnings
for months before the fog fell;
said I had a negative attitude,
said I was a false prophet of doom,
as they patted their tummies,
cooing, "Things were never better,"
and countered with accounts of the "real" Apocalypse,
which wasn't expected for years.
Then they called me heartless
as I sang in my dehumidified tower
and glowered as the mist descended.
For days and days,
the wicked haze
in Nightsfield flowered,
mightily empowered,
like quintillion reproductions
of Caesar's legions
fitted out to conquer Gaul
and all its three parts.
The demonic haze
fixed its gaze,
focused its Rasputin eye,
and crouched beneath the velvet sky,
hiding slyly near the seas,
the grasses, sand,
and trees --
snickering silently within its weeping belly,
hurling mute invectives
through the air of those who had not cared --
but the didn't-cares began to care
as they suffered their infections
and wild hallucinations
with the utmost of clamor and indignant protest,
but all for naught.
They ought to have geared themselves in lead
when the warnings were given --
the fools,
the fools!
the laidback, complacent fools!
schooled in "That's the way things are."
How dare they complain
of a pain in their guts
after sitting in ruts with smiles on their faces!
Alas -- I pitied the grasshoppers
who closed their eyes and ears
and trusted their fates to those in power;
who inflicted themselves with welts in the name of piety,
and who screamed in agony
as vinegar droplets from the mist entered their wounds.

(continued)


WHAT
GOES UP....

Melissa Wessell



Mike Stillman

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★THE BIG BOOK OF SHOELACE REPAIR★

This is a book about the theory and practice of shoelace repair as it exists today ... not as a dull habit, but as an acute fever. Including the history of shoelace repair from medieval times to the present, with special emphasis on the influence of the Gordian School in the Renaissance of this great art form, this book examines shoelaces from one end to the other, with an eyelet for detail. Sure to become the definitive work on the subject thus far, THE BIG BOOK OF SHOELACE REPAIR includes a survey of repair techniques throughout the world, and exposes the scandalous neglect of shoelace repair in American public education. Including 400 color plates and 1,200 black and white diagrams, this book is a must for the professional and do-it-yourselfer alike.

$22.50 from Little, Brown, and Co.

****

Ernest McCabe

EASY AS SWATTIN A FLY

"It's so easy," Philip's father said,
"Just like swatting a fly."
So Philip's father's hand
Hit the little model universe
Philip had so carefully constructed.
It was true, it was as easy
As swatting a fly. Millions who
Lived on the little planet died.

Meanwhile, on an even larger plane
In another dimension,
Another father counseled his son.
"It's easy, just like swattin a fly,"
Except this time, Philip and
His father were on the other end
Of the swatter.

****

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WORDEATER XXXVIII STAFF

Judy Belfield
Kristi Carsten
Bob Frederick
Mark Hulfactor
Ernest McCabe
Dave Moore
John Stobart

To get a submission printed in this issue, four of the above had to vote for acceptance.

Manuscripts or cover designs for WORDEATER XXXIX, the next issue, must be submitted to John Stobart in room C-1069 by February 26. Manuscripts will not be returned. They may be anonymous and should be typed.

Cash prizes are frequently awarded to outstanding contributors to an issue. While there were many fine submissions made for this issue, no cash prizes were awarded for literary entries.

$20.00 FOR COVER DESIGNS GOES TO

ED GIRARD

WORDEATER is collated by staff members and other volunteers on the consourse outside G-Building. Anyone wishing to help assemble WORDEATER is most graciously welcome to join in the fun.

WORDEATER deadlines this year:

WORDEATER 39 - February 26, 1982
40 - April 30, 1982

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